

and transport some 120 species of dung beetles from many parts of Africa south of the Sahara. He describes this project as "probably unique in the history of applied ecology." (AIS).

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I am indebted for this article to The Australian News and Information Bureau, which went to some trouble on my account to comply with my request for the names of the beetle species and also of the flies concerned.—Ed.

A variety of *Syrphus alboatriatus* Fallén (Diptera: Syrphidae)

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Coe (1953) states this species has tergites 3 and 4 with a pair of straight yellow bars, almost or quite touching the anterior margin of the tergites on the median line, where they are usually narrowly connected, and sloping down towards the side-margins. He also states that in some examples the yellow markings of the tergites are reduced.

I have now examined several specimens of this insect, and have come to the conclusion that there is a definite case for the naming of a separate variety, since the differences between the two apparent forms are much greater than suggested by Coe.

The normal form, which agrees with Coe's description, has the following characteristics:—

- (1) Legs entirely yellow/orange except for the distal tarsi on the hind legs, and a dark band on the centre of the hind femora of the male.
- (2) Scutellum yellow, with only faint dark markings.
- (3) Eyes with short hairs.
- (4) Thorax with distinct yellow side-markings at front.
- (5) Yellow markings on tergites 3 and 4 touching at the centre for a distance equal at least to half the depth of the yellow markings, and touching the base of the tergites on the median line.

The variety has the following characteristics:—

- (1) All femora and tarsi black, and the centre of the hind tibia is also black.
- (2) Scutellum with a distinct dark centre.
- (3) Eyes distinctly hairy.
- (4) Thorax with very faint or no side-markings.
- (5) Yellow markings on tergites 3 and 4 not connected at middle, and not touching base of tergites on median line.

The above description apply equally to males and females of both form.

I have records of the normal form from the Bristol area and various parts of Dorset, and of the variety from South and East Dorset.

This does not appear to be a melanic, as melanics of various *Syrphus* species occur, and these are invariably entirely black.

Also, the melanics usually occur, alongside normal forms, whereas, from information available to date, it appears that the form of *S. albostriatus* found seems to depend on the locality, as I have no records of both forms occurring together. Also, I have not examined any specimens which appear intermediate between the two forms.

Having stated the case for the existence of a variety, I should like to suggest the name:

Syrphus albostriatus Fallén var. *nigrum*.

I would naturally be more than pleased to hear from any person who has any comments or observations to make on this matter.

I am indebted to Mr C. Searle for allowing me to examine specimens of *S. albostriatus* in his collection.

Reference

Coe. R. L. Royal Entomological Society Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects. Vol. X. Part I. (London 1953).

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Notes and Observations

PLUSIA GAMMA L. AND *NOMOPHILA NOCTUELLA* SCHIFF. IN SOUTH DEVON.—Totals recorded in my mercury vapour light trap during the period 12th May to 15th September 1971 are as under, the 1970 figures being shown in brackets:

Plusia gamma L. The May total was 11 (17); June 23 (33); July 47 (121); August 1451 (473) with peaks of 43 on 8th, 91 on 12th, 105 on 16th, 86 on 17th, 181 on 19th, 295 on 20th, 101 on 21st, 103 on 24th and 115 on 26th September, for 15 nights, showed a total of say 1500 (23) with peaks of 60 on 5th, 76 on 6th, 80 on 9th, 187 on 11th, 105 on 12th, 61 on 13th, 73 on 14th and 205 on 15th.

Nomophila noctuella Schiff. May 0 (2), June 0 (18), July 4 (114), August 111 (311) with peaks of 10 on 17th, 15 on 19th, 10 on 20th, 8 on 24th, 9 on 25th and 10 on 27th. The September total for 15 nights was 13 (97).—H. L. O'HEFFERNAN, c/o 12 Firth Road, Rondebosch, C.P., South Africa. 16.ix.1971.

CURIOUS BEHAVIOUR OF LARVA OF *ACHERONTIA ATROPOS* L.—To these notes some years ago I detailed unusual behaviour of the brown coloured form of the larva. In Cape Town last February I captured one evening a brown larva, feeding on *Tecomaria eupensis*. It was parasitized by a Tachinid fly.

It fed all night after capture and was still eating at 8.30 a.m. next day. By 1 p.m. it was completely buried in the earth provided. It emerged again at 7.45 p.m. and was eating within ten minutes: large quantities of the food plant were consumed during the night and at 9.45 a.m. next day it was still resting